Meier Immunity Bid Delayed by Prosecutor

11/21/73

By Michael Putzel
Associated Press

The Watergate special prosecutor's office yesterday delayed a Senate Watergate committee effort to gain limited immunity for John H. Meier, a former employee of billionaire Howard Hughes and long-time associate of President Nixon's brother, F. Donald Nixon.

The Senate panel had asked Chief U. S. District Court Judge John J. Sirica to grant Meier immunity from prosecution based on any evidence he might furnish the committee. But Sirica granted the prosecutors' request yesterday that he block the immunity order until Dec. 5, the maximum delay permitted by law. The prosecutors gave no reason for their request.

Meier, according to several sources, has information relating to Hughes's $100,000 cash gift to C. G. (Bebe) Rebozo, the President's close friend and Key Biscayne, Fla., neighbor.

The White House has said that the money was intended as a campaign contribution, Rebozo kept it for three years, and he returned it to a Hughes lawyer earlier this year.

Meier currently is under federal indictment on charges of evading income taxes on more than $250,000 he earned in 1968 and 1969 while overseeing purchase of several thousand Western mining claims for Hughes.

Hughes is suing Meier and several associates claiming they acquired marginal mining properties and sold them to Hughes at inflated prices.

Meier has denied the charges, saying they grew out of White House ire at his refusal to break off his association with the President's brother and his nephew, Donald A. Nixon.

He also has filed a motion in one of the court cases seeking to learn if any of his conversations were overheard while the Secret Service was tapping the telephone of the President's brother.

Watergate committee sources said Meier was involved in the first of two unsuccessful attempts to deliver the Hughes money in 1968.

In August 1968, the sources said, Rebozo and an old friend and Nixon campaign worker, Richard G. Danner, met Hughes lawyer Edward P. Morgan in New York.

Morgan told them that Meier and F. Donald Nixon were in New York at the time and "ready to make the drop," the sources said, but when Rebozo heard the Nixon brother's name mentioned, he broke off the discussion.